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RECENT DISCOVERIES IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

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Synesius the scholar walks the streets of Alexandria with a strange figure at his side. An Oxford don with the unlovely garments of the twentieth century looks oddly out of place among the tunics, cloaks, and togas that fill those brilliant fourth-century streets. They are on their way to the library, in which, of all the sights of the city, the Oxonian has shown the keenest interest. Together they disappear within its pillared portico. An hour passes; the purple shadows creep along the glistening pavement. At length they emerge. The don's pockets are filled with papyrus rolls from the cedar-scented pigeonholes of the library, and Synesius is pressing upon him a fine parchment codex as a parting gift from the most famous of ancient libraries to the most famous of modern ones.

This is not wholly fable. The best of it is true, for it only puts graphically what has actually happened in recent days in the recovery of lost works of ancient literature. It is indeed as if one of ourselves had visited ancient Alexandria and had been given all he could carry of the treasures of classical and Christian literature to take back to an age which had believed them to have perished forever.

From the end of the second century onward Christian literature is relatively abundant. But for the earlier time, when the New Testament collection

was growing up and when other gospels were still read and Christian practices still varied, our written remains are surprisingly meager. There were momentous developments in Christianity in that dim second century, and all that throws light on its movements helps to the understanding of the transition. The apostolic Christianity that emerges at the end of the second century is not quite the same apostolic Christianity that the first century had bequeathed to the second. How did the change come about? It is for just this time and problem that our new armful of Christian books is richest and most instructive.

Of the lost literature of the second century the closing quarter of the nineteenth gave back to us in 1883 the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, in 1888 the long-lost *Diatessaron* of Tatian, in 1890 the *Apology* of Aristides, the earliest complete Christian apology thus far found, in 1892 considerable parts of the Gospel and the Revelation of Peter, and in 1897 the Oxyrhynchus Sayings of Jesus. These constitute a notable addition to the remains of early Christian literature. But the past twelve years have witnessed discoveries quite as important.

The extraordinary results of the excavations of Grenfell and Hunt on the site of the Roman Oxyrhynchus in Upper Egypt, where in 1897 they

unearthed thousands of Greek papyri of all sorts, are widely known. The story of their later return in 1903 to the same site and of their further successes there has been less often told. Among the discoveries of this second visit were three Christian manuscripts of great interest. One was a group of Sayings of Jesus very like those found at Oxyrhynchus six years before. Each saying is introduced by the formula "Jesus saith," but especial interest attaches to the opening lines of the fragment, which are evidently from the beginning of the collection of Sayings: "These are the . . . words which Jesus the Living Lord spake unto . . . Thomas. And he said unto them, No one that hearkens to these words shall ever taste of death." Parts of five sayings are preserved in the papyrus, of which the first, second, and fourth are most complete. The first reads, "Jesus saith, Let not him who seeks cease until he find, and when he finds he shall be astonished: astonished he shall reach the Kingdom, and having reached the Kingdom he shall find rest." This agrees remarkably with a saying quoted by Clement of Alexandria from the Gospel according to the Hebrews, that is, probably, the Gospel first current among Jewish Christians of Egypt, and was almost certainly drawn by the collector of these Sayings from that gospel. The second saying also has points of contact with the encyclopedic Clement:

You ask who are those who draw us, if the Kingdom is in Heaven. The fowls of the air and all beasts that are upon the earth or under the earth and the fishes of the sea, these are they that draw you. And the Kingdom of Heaven is within you, and whoever shall know himself shall find it.

Strive therefore to know yourselves, and ye shall be aware that ye are the sons of [an almighty] Father, and ye shall know that ye are in [the city of God] and ye are [the city?]

The meaning is perhaps that there is a divine element even in the lower stages of creation and that it reaches a higher level in man, who has within him the Kingdom of Heaven and may know sonship to God. It is this idea of knowing God through knowing one's self that connects this saying with Clement of Alexandria.

After a third much-mutilated saying, about the first and the last, resembling Mark 10:31, the fourth saying runs, "Jesus saith, Everything that is not before thy face and that which is hidden from thee shall be revealed to thee. For there is nothing hidden which shall not be made manifest, nor buried which shall not be raised." This recalls familiar sayings in our Synoptic Gospels, for example, Mark 4:22 and its parallels, of which this seems to be an elaboration.

The fifth and last of these new Logia begins with a question from the disciples, "How shall we fast and how shall we pray? and what [commandment?] shall we observe?" But beyond the answering "Jesus saith," little can be made of it.

It would seem that the collection of Sayings of which this was the beginning was a free compilation by some Jewish Christian of Alexandria about the middle of the second century, of sayings gathered from our canonical Gospels, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and possibly others, while this particular papyrus

copy was probably written a hundred years after, to serve the private devotions of some Christian in Upper Egypt, much as modern collections of Jesus' sayings are still made to do.

That second campaign at Oxyrhynchus yielded two fragments of ancient Gospels. The broken papyrus roll which contained one of these was written in the first half of the third century, while the Gospel from which it comes was perhaps a century older. Its tenor is far from commonplace:

Take no thought from morning until evening nor from evening until morning, either for your food what ye shall eat, nor for your raiment what ye shall put on. Ye are far better than the lilies which grow but spin not. Having one garment what do you lack? Who could add to your stature? He himself will give you your garment. . . . His disciples say unto him, When wilt thou be manifest to us and when shall we see thee? He saith when ye shall be stripped and not ashamed. . . . He said, The key of knowledge ye hid. Ye entered not in yourselves, and to them that were entering in ye opened not.

Everyone will observe the resemblance of this passage to our Synoptic Gospels, or rather its dependence upon them. But the reference to being unashamed recalls a passage quoted by Clement of Alexandria from the Gospel according to the Egyptians, about Salome's question, "When shall thy kingdom come?" and Jesus' answer, "When ye shall trample upon the garment of shame." The Gospel according to the Egyptians seems to have been the one current between 125 and 175 among gentile Christians in Egypt. It is not impossible that this papyrus is from that

lost Gospel, and that the conversation quoted by Clement immediately followed this fragment.

The other gospel fragment found in 1903 is a little scrap of parchment, not four inches square, a leaf from a fourth-century book, and so closely written that it contains about two hundred words. It gives a conversation in the temple between Jesus and a Pharisee, "a chief priest," about spiritual as against ceremonial purification, and gives an entirely new picture of temple customs and topography. Since the useful custom of putting running headings at the top of each page was unknown to the ancients, it is not easy to learn to what Gospel the leaf belonged. But it shows some resemblance to the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and it is probable that this new leaf belonged to that most important of lost Gospels or at least to the later form into which it expanded in the third century. The main episode in the fragment reads:

And he took them and brought them into the very place of purification, and was walking in the temple. And a certain Pharisee, a chief priest, whose name was Levi, met them and said to the Savior, "Who gave thee leave to walk in this place of purification and to see these holy vessels, when thou has not washed nor yet have thy disciples bathed their feet? But defiled thou hast walked in this temple, which is a pure place, wherein no other man walks except he has washed himself and changed his garments, neither does he venture to see these holy vessels." And the Savior straightway stood still with his disciples, and answered him, "Art thou, then, being here in the temple, clean?" He saith unto him, "I am clean; for I washed in the Pool of David, and having descended by one

staircase I ascended by another, and I put on white and clean garments, and then I came and looked upon these holy vessels." The Savior answered and said unto him, "Woe, ye blind, who see not. Thou hast washed in these running waters wherein dogs and swine have been cast night and day, and hast cleansed and wiped the outside skin which also the harlots and flute-girls anoint and wash and wipe and beautify for the lust of men, but within they are full of scorpions and all wickedness. But I and my disciples, who thou sayest have not bathed, have been dipped in the waters of eternal life which come from. . . . But woe unto the"

The whole is a graphic statement of Jesus' teaching about cleansing the inside of the cup, which is finding a new emphasis in our day.

In 1904 a native scholar found at Erivan in Armenia an Armenian manuscript containing a lost work of Irenaeus, *In Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*. Up to that time only one complete work of Irenaeus was known to be extant, his famous treatise *Against Heresies*, written about 185 A.D. The figure of Irenaeus is a commanding one in early Christian literature. Born in Asia Minor, and more than once a visitor to Rome, he spent his most active years in Gaul as bishop of Lyons. But his unique significance lies in his relation to the new system which in his day clearly pervaded the churches, which emphasized a New Testament scripture, the Apostles' Creed, and episcopal organization, of which only scattered hints appear in earlier literature. It is for his emphasis on these that Irenaeus is often spoken of as the first Catholic Father.

Eusebius tells us most about the works of Irenaeus, and among them he

mentions one, *In Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, which he says Irenaeus dedicated to a brother Marcian. It is this long-lost work, not in the original Greek, but in an Armenian version, that the Erivan discovery has restored to us. It should be observed that this is no tattered leaf, but a considerable book, and that our knowledge of the leading Catholic church writer of the second century is substantially increased thereby, for whereas we have had one complete work of his and some fragments, we now possess two of his major works in full. The newly discovered work was evidently addressed to the laity. It sets forth in a simple and telling way the apostolic type of Christianity which Irenaeus maintained, and shows its agreement with numerous Old Testament prophecies. Irenaeus' usual method is to describe an incident in the gospel story and then quote some prophecy which he thinks is fulfilled in it. The work shows Irenaeus at the task of teaching his Gallic flock to defend their Christian faith in all its aspects by appeal to the Old Testament. Many New Testament books are reflected in it, but here, as in the older work of Irenaeus, no use is made of Hebrews or Revelation, and it seems clearer than ever that these books had no place in his New Testament.

Not a few ancient writers mention a work called the Acts of Paul, and the old lists of scriptural books give its length as nearly 3,600 lines, or more than twice the length of the Gospel of Mark. Origen is the first writer to mention it by name. Eusebius speaks of it as one of the books whose right to a place in the New Testament was

denied in his day, that is, early in the fourth century. Hippolytus shows how highly it was regarded at Rome in the third century. "For if we believe," he writes, "that when Paul was condemned to the wild beasts, a lion let loose upon him fell down and licked his feet, how shall we not believe the things that happened in the case of Daniel?" That is, Hippolytus is so sure that his readers believe the Acts of Paul that he can argue from its statements to those of the Book of Daniel.

Twenty years ago little besides these allusions was known of the Acts of Paul. It was conjectured that to it probably belonged the Martyrdom of Paul and the spurious correspondence between Paul and the Corinthian church, long accepted, in Syria at least, as Scripture. But as late as 1896 even this was disputed. In that year, however, Reinhardt purchased from an Akhmim dealer who was visiting Cairo a large but badly broken Coptic papyrus book, which was destined to put a new face on the problem of the Acts of Paul. It was sent to Heidelberg, and Carl Schmidt undertook its investigation. It was a long and laborious task. The leaves and fragments were in much disorder, and years passed before his work appeared. But Schmidt had hardly to begin his study to identify it, for the manuscript plainly exhibited its name, the Acts of Paul according to the Apostle. More than this, he was able at once to report that it contained, not only the Corinthian correspondence and the Martyrdom, but also the Acts of Paul and Thecla, already well known in half a dozen versions, and in a whole series of Greek manuscripts. It has

often been wondered why this romantic little work began so abruptly: "As Paul was going up to Iconium after his escape from Antioch, Demas and Hermogenes the coppersmith were his fellow-travelers." This abruptness is now explained, for that story was simply the most popular chapter of the Acts of Paul, which circulated separately and finally survived as an independent narrative, when the book to which it belonged was forgotten.

It was this chapter in particular of the Acts of Paul which roused the anger of Tertullian and led that redoubtable anti-feminist, about 200 A.D., to inquire into its origin. In denouncing women who claim the right to teach in the church, he writes:

If the writings which go wrongly under Paul's name claim Thecla's example as a license for teaching and baptizing, let them know that in Asia the presbyter who composed that writing as if he were augmenting Paul's fame out of his own store, after being convicted and confessing that he had done it out of love of Paul, was removed from his office.

This statement in Tertullian shows that the Acts originated in the province of Asia, about 175 A.D., and gives a hint also of their purpose of bringing Paul up to date, and relieving him of the unpopularity felt then as now of his refusal to permit women to teach in his churches.

The story of the Acts of Paul, as pieced together from the Heidelberg papyrus, may be briefly sketched:

1. The curtain rises at Pisidian Antioch. Paul restores to life a Jewish boy, and this leads to the conversion of the boy's parents, but the populace

becomes incensed and drives Paul from the town.

2. Paul reaches Iconium. It is this episode that has survived as the Acts of Paul and Thecla. Some kernel of fact may exist here; it is thought that there must really have been a girl named Thecla who was converted by Paul at Iconium and became active in the Christian missionary movement. The point of the Acts, however, is that she became a religious teacher and was recognized as such by Paul, in contrast to his reputed unwillingness that a woman should teach. The story romantically relates Thecla's conversion, her refusal to marry her betrothed, her persecution, baptism, and miraculous escapes, her visit to Paul at Myra, her final retirement to Seleucia, and her death there.

3. At Myra, where Thecla had left Paul, he cures a dropsical person, and thus incurs the enmity of the man's son Hermippus, who had counted on inheriting his father's property at an early day. The son is smitten with blindness, but on repenting is restored.

4. Paul now proceeds by way of Perga to Sidon. There the populace shuts him and his friends up in the temple of Apollo, part of which collapses in the course of the night. The populace is further incensed at this, and hurries Paul and his companions to the theater; the sequel is missing.

5. Paul reappears at Tyre, where he heals the sick and discourses upon Judaism.

6. He is next found in some mines, of unknown location, where a certain Frontina, who has been converted, is thrown from a cliff and is killed; but

Paul restores her to life, and leads her home through the town, where the people are at once won to Christianity.

7. Here perhaps belongs the Ephesus episode related by Nicephorus but not included in the Coptic version. In it Paul is cast into prison, and is there visited by two women of position, who are converted. Paul escapes from prison long enough to baptize them on the seashore. Later he is exposed to the lions, but they refuse to attack him. A hailstorm intervenes and kills the animals and many of the spectators. The governor is converted. Paul is released and visits Macedonia and Achaea, and returns by way of Macedonia to Asia.

8. In the Coptic Acts, Paul reappears at Philippi. While in prison there he receives from the Corinthians a letter reporting that two false teachers, Simon and Cleobius, are disturbing them. He writes a letter to the Corinthians, receives a reply from them, and writes them a second time. The Syrian and Armenian churches anciently accepted this later Corinthian correspondence as genuine.

9. Paul takes leave of the Philippians; a local prophet and prophetess predict his works and fate at Rome.

10. Paul suffers martyrdom at Rome, being beheaded by order of Nero, but afterward reappears.

It is not necessary to suppose that this is all there was of the Acts of Paul. Jerome has an allusion to another element. "Therefore," he says, "the travels of Paul and Thecla and the whole fable of the baptized lion, we reckon among the apocryphal writings." Origen says that the Acts of Paul contained the words of Jesus, "I go to be crucified

again." These words were the answer to Peter's question, "Domine, quo vadis?" and must have formed part of an account of the martyrdom of Peter. It seems probable, therefore, that the famous story of Peter's death, with its account of his meeting with Jesus outside the gates of Rome, and his return after Jesus' reproof, to be crucified in Rome, belonged originally to the Acts of Paul.

While much of it is mere fancy, it is not without significance as an effort at an edifying historical novel designed to bring Paul near to Asiatic Christians more than a hundred years after his time. It is plain that many episodes in it had their origin in passing expressions or allusions in the genuine letters of Paul, which served to suggest to the Asiatic presbyter incidents or whole chapters for his work. Thus the fight with beasts at Ephesus is probably built around a literal understanding of the remark in I Corinthians, "What doth it profit me if after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus?" It may also serve as an example of the freedom with which men in the second century could treat the life of Paul, and further of the uncritical spirit in which writers as able as Hippolytus welcomed such works when they seemed orthodox and edifying.

On January 4, 1909, Professor Rendel Harris, of Birmingham, discovered among Syriac manuscripts in his own library the lost Odes of Solomon. Rendel Harris is more than a philologist; he is a philanthropist, and has more than once journeyed through Asia Minor and Syria distributing relief to plundered Armenians. On these

journeys he has sometimes found ancient manuscripts; some of these he has bought, others he has had carefully copied. In this way he has become possessed of a varied collection of manuscripts. Among these was a Syriac Psalter three or four centuries old, which Dr. Harris had picked up on one of his journeys but had never examined closely. Chancing to look at it on that day, he observed that it was not the biblical Psalms, but a different collection, which he was soon able to identify, from a quotation in the fourth-century writer Lactantius, as the so-called Odes of Solomon. This work was well known to the makers of the ancient lists of canonical books, and is quoted several times by writers of the third and fourth centuries. The Odes were forty-two in number, but the first two are wanting in the manuscript.

We are thus at last in a position to know what these mysterious Odes really were. Of course they have nothing to do with Solomon; their name is due to the fondness of the ancients for finding some ancient name worthier than their own by which to designate a work of edification or devotion, and to the fact that the Books of Kings say of Solomon that "he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five." It was immediately seen that the Odes were Christian hymns, and their reticence upon some matters prominent in later Christian thought, and their way of touching upon others, made it plain that they belonged to a very early period, either the end of the first century or the beginning of the second. There is some decidedly Jewish color in them, which may be due to the

Jewish-Christian atmosphere in which they were composed or to the use of older Jewish hymns in making up these Christian ones early in the second century. At all events they come from a time when the New Testament was still being written and constitute a really independent source for the study of very early Christian life. A curious sequel to this discovery developed through the studies of Professor Burkitt, of Cambridge, who soon found that another manuscript of the Odes or the greater part of them had been lying in the British Museum for seventy years, among those brought back by Tattam from the Nitrian monasteries of Egypt in 1842. Great interest has been aroused by Professor Harris' discovery. We have had gospels and letters, acts and apocalypses, even manuals and sermons from the early church, but never before its hymns. Yet it has always been clear from statements in Pliny, in the New Testament, and in early Christian writings that hymns played an important part in the worship of the primitive church. They are not primarily doctrinal, they show little use of Christian literature, and the historical references in them are few and obscure. They reflect instead a mystical religious atmosphere. As in the Gospel of John, the great words in the Odes are Truth, Love, Hope, Grace, Joy, Light, Life, Peace. Their theology is rather that of John than of Paul.

Some of the Odes begin with similes that suggest Old Testament models. "As the sun is joy to them that seek for its daybreak, so is my joy the Lord." "As the work of the husbandman is the ploughshare, and the work of the

steersman is the guidance of the ship, so also my work is the psalm of the Lord." The Odes are full of bold, sometimes even grotesque, figures. "Behold the Lord is our mirror. Open thine eyes and see them in him." "I am a priest of the Lord and to him I do priestly service and to him I offer the sacrifice of his thought." "An everlasting crown forever is truth: blessed are they who set it on their heads." Among the clearest Christian touches in the Odes are the references to the virgin birth, the dove at the baptism, the sign of the cross in the arms outstretched in prayer, and the descent into Hades.

It seems certain that we have among these Odes Christian hymns substantially contemporary with the snatches of songs in Ephesians:

Awake, thou that sleepest,
And arise from the dead
And Christ shall dawn upon thee;

and I Timothy:

He who was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the spirit,
Seen of angels,
Preached among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.

The cast of this latter stanza has a subtle resemblance to the lines on the nativity in Ode 19:

She brought him forth openly,
And acquired him with great dignity,
And loved him in his swaddling clothes,
And guarded him kindly,
And showed him in majesty.

Christian hymns and Jewish psalms are after all parts of one continuous hymnology, and in these Odes we see the Jewish stream entering the Christian.

The famous saying ascribed to Augustine, "Join thyself to the eternal God and thou shalt be eternal," seems an unmistakable quotation from the third of the Odes: "He that is joined to him that is immortal will himself become immortal."

Of the authorship of these Odes nothing is definitely known. Indeed, we are not sure of the land in which they were written, nor whether the language in which they were originally composed was Greek or Syriac. But at any rate, as their discoverer once remarked of them, they are redolent of antiquity and radiant with spiritual light.

In July, 1911, Constantine Diobouniotis, a *Privat-Docent* in the University of Athens, sent to Berlin a copy he had made of a short work on the Apocalypse which had been found in a tenth-century manuscript in the Meteoron monastery in the north of Greece. The monastery is one of those so picturesquely situated on the summits of the rocky detached pinnacles of the Pindus Mountains, which have to be reached by the aid of basket, rope, and windlass. The commentary was anonymous, but Diobouniotis thought it might be a work of Hippolytus, one of whose treatises had already been found in the same manuscript.

The Berlin scholars at once recognized in it a work of Origen, the founder of Christian interpretation and of systematic theology, the leading theologian of Christian antiquity, and the father of ecclesiastical science. Origen was the most voluminous of ancient Christian writers. Epiphanius says that he left six thousand works, but this enumeration must have included individual

sermons, lectures, and addresses, as well as greater works like the *Hexapla*, which was so huge that it was never copied. Part of Origen's prolificness was due to his friend and patron Ambrose, who supplied him with stenographers and secretaries so that he might have every facility to record the results of his studies, and so eagerly urged him on in his work that Origen calls him his taskmaster who "left him no leisure for meals or rest."

These thirty-seven paragraphs of the commentary on Revelation are a new and unexpected legacy from the first great interpreter of the New Testament. It is true that it has not been known that Origen ever wrote a commentary or even a set of scholia on the Revelation. But it is an interesting fact that in his commentary on Matthew he expressed the intention of producing a commentary on Revelation. More than this, the commentary on Matthew was one of the latest of Origen's works, and falls between 245 and 249 A.D. It was in 249 or 250 that the persecution of Decius overtook Origen, and the tortures he then endured eventually resulted in his death in his seventieth year. It has been suggested that these comments on Revelation may have been his last work and that they broke off before the whole book had been covered, because the outbreak of the persecution interrupted Origen in the midst of his task.

Greek and Armenian convents, travels in Asia, and excavations in Egypt have contributed these new materials to our accumulations of early Christian literature. These and similar sources will no doubt continue to enrich them, and increasingly as the search increases in

energy and scope. Remarkable as have been the finds of the past ten years, there are still greater prizes to be sought, and with no slight prospect of success. The lost work of Papias of Hierapolis, which is sure to throw light on the origin of the Gospels, is known to have been extant as late as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as European manuscript catalogues of 1218 and 1341 attest. Curzon visiting Athos in 1837 saw in the Caracallou convent a manuscript of Justin which, if re-

covered now, might throw important light on his lost works. The earliest of Christian apologies, that of Quadratus, written in the time of Hadrian, has yet to be found, and the Gospels according to the Hebrews and the Egyptians besides several ancient works bearing the name of Peter still await the excavator or the explorer. A dozen years have given us much, and before another dozen passes our predatory Oxford scholar will have paid another visit to Synesius at Alexandria.

DIFFICULTIES CONCERNING PRAYER. III

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IV. Difficulty from the Lack of a Felt Presence and a Definite Response in Prayer

Perhaps the difficulty that is most felt by those trying to find their way into the religious life is what they take to be the lack of a felt presence and a definite response from God in prayer, such as they feel that they obtain in relation to the outer world or to another person in the body. The complaint is of a sense of seeming unreality, that seems to them quite different from what they experience in these other relations.

Concerning this really comprehensive difficulty, it is to be said, first of all, that there is no doubt that God's relation to us is not intended to be an obtrusive relation—a relation that forces itself upon us and from the sense of which

we are unable to escape. As I have elsewhere argued, the very possibility of moral choice on our part, and of a normal development in the moral and religious life, seems to require that God should sacredly respect our freedom and not make his relation to us an obtrusive or dominating or inescapable one. We need here imperatively the invisible God. And this consideration deeply affects the whole problem. We shall return to it a little later.

Moreover, it is to be said that God must be known like any other personality, through his self-manifestations. If we are right in thinking at all of a God immanent in the whole universe, these self-manifestations must be manifold: in the constitution of nature, in our own natures and experience, in human history, in the touch of other